

GREENBELT, MD – On Monday, July 16, 2007, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) participated today in a groundbreaking ceremony for NASA's new Exploration Sciences Building at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) in Greenbelt, MD. The environmentally friendly structure represents the first piece of the GSFC Facilities Master Plan to establish a more unified and efficient campus in order to bring scientists together for purposes of collaboration and research. Rep. Hoyer was joined by NASA Goddard's Director Dr. Edward Weiler, Director of Sciences and Exploration Laurie Leshin, and Deputy Administrator Shana Dale in assisting with the first dig at the construction site.

"Maryland and Prince George's County are extremely fortunate to have a world class facility like Goddard located right here in our own backyard – and we are proud to be a part of the Center's continued growth and evolution," stated Rep. Hoyer. "What is especially notable about this impressive facility is that it will be a U.S. Green Building Council certified "green" building. Given Goddard's groundbreaking climate change research, it is only appropriate that Goddard, itself, be at the forefront of environmentally conscious development – and I applaud NASA and Goddard's actions to promote responsible environmental stewardship and help us to leave our children and grandchildren a planet that is both healthy and sustainable."

When completed, the 200,000 square-foot office and laboratory space will house approximately 500 employees from the Astrophysics Science Division, the Solar Systems Exploration Division, as well as the Directorate office. The project also replaces outdated existing laboratory space and provides flexible modern laboratories to perform cutting edge research and prototype development. Building construction is expected to be completed by the end of July 2009, followed by installation of the building's laboratories.

"NASA's new eco-friendly science building will provide state of the art laboratories and technology for our scientists, giving them access to modern tools and facilities for continued world class research in space and Earth science, and in support of NASA's mission," stated Dr. Edward Weiler.

The Exploration Sciences Building is designed as a U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) structure. LEED is a voluntary Green Building Rating System certification program that defines high-performance, environmentally responsible buildings. NASA requires all new facilities projects to reach the Silver rating, signifying a high level of commitment to designing, procuring, and installing environmentally friendly materials and incorporating sustainable design and construction practices.

"The NASA team is looking forward to this first major step in the execution of the GSFC Facilities Master Plan," said David Larsen, Exploration Sciences Building Project Manager at Goddard. "The Exploration Sciences Building will serve as the primary tie in the overall effort of unifying the currently divided east and west campuses."

Also in attendance from NASA were Dr. Colleen Hartman, Deputy Associate Administrator, Science Mission Directorate; and Charles Scales, Associate Deputy Administrator. Other attendees included Judith Davis, Mayor of Greenbelt; Ingrid Turner of the Prince George's County Council; and Leta Mach of the Greenbelt City Council.

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